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Art Unit: 2131
Examiner: Sherkat
Docket No.: RPS9 2001 0119 US1

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1 (currently amended). A method for recording an in-service date associated with an electronic device, comprising:

establishing an initial valid date as the current date for the device and maintaining the current date thereafter;

responsive to determining that the device is in service and that no in service date has been stored previously, storing the current date ~~in non-volatile storage~~ as the in-service date; and

performing an action selected from:

periodically monitoring the current date of the device to determine if the valid date has been altered after storing the in-service date; and

obtaining the in-service date from the non-volatile device with an external readout machine connected to the non-volatile storage.

responsive to determining that the initial valid date has not been established, generating a valid date error message before transitioning to a normal operating mode in which the user is enabled to operate the device; and

responsive to determining that the in service date is after the current date, issuing an in service data error message before transitioning the system to a normal operating mode.

2 (original). The method of claim 1, wherein establishing the valid date comprises entering the current date during a power on sequence of the device.

3 (original). The method of claim 1, wherein determining that the device is in service comprises determining that the device has been operating for a predetermined length of time after the valid date is set.

4 (original). The method of claim 1, wherein storing the current date in non-volatile storage comprises storing the current date in a non-volatile storage device of a service processor of the device such that the stored date is inaccessible to a main processor of the device.

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5 (original). The method of claim 1, wherein periodically monitoring the valid date, comprises periodically determining if the valid date is earlier than the in-service date.

6 (original). The method of claim 5, further comprising, responsive to determining that the current date is earlier than the in-service date, issuing an error message.

7 (original). The method of claim 6, further comprising, responsive to determining that the current date is earlier than the in-service date, enabling alteration of the in-service to match the current date.

8 (original). The method of claim 7, wherein enabling the alteration includes requiring an operator of the device to enter a unlocking code.

9 (canceled).

10 (original). The method of claim 1, wherein obtaining the in-service date via the readout machine comprises executing an I2C compliant communication between the readout machine and the non-volatile memory.

11 (currently amended). A data processing system, comprising:

a main processor having access to a system memory;

a real-time clock configured to maintain the current date upon being initialized with a valid date;

non-volatile storage; and

a set of processor executable instructions at least a portion of which are contained in the system memory, wherein the instructions are configured to store the current date in the non-volatile storage as the in-service date automatically;

wherein the system is further configured to issue an error message, prior to transitioning to a normal operating mode in which the user is able to operate the device, responsive to determining that the current date has been altered after storing the in-service date.

12 (canceled).

13 (original). The system of claim 11, wherein determining if the current date is altered after storing the in-service date comprises periodically monitoring the current date to determine if the current date is earlier than the in-service date.

14 (original). The system of claim 11, wherein the contents of the non-volatile storage device are externally accessible.

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15 (original). The system of claim 14, further comprising an external readout device configured to access the contents of the non-volatile storage via a communication bus.

16 (original). The system of claim 15, wherein the communication bus includes power signals such that the readout device can access the contents red

17 (original). The system of claim 16, wherein the communication bus comprises an I2C communication bus.

18 (original). The system of claim 11, further comprising a service processor connected to the main processor, wherein the non-volatile storage device comprises a non-volatile storage device of the service processor that is inaccessible to the main processor.

19 (original). The system of claim 11, wherein the processor executable instructions are further configured to enable alteration of the in-service to match the current date responsive to determining that the current date is earlier than the in-service date.

20 (original). The system of claim 19, enabling alteration of the in-service date requires an operator of the device to enter a unlocking code.

21 (original). The system of claim 20, wherein requiring the operator to enter a unlocking code includes requiring the operator to obtain the unlocking code from a manufacturer of the device.

22 (new). A computer program product comprising computer executable instructions, stored on a computer readable storage medium for maintaining an in service date (ISD) representative of the date on which an electronic device is placed in service, comprising:

instructions for determining, upon powering on the electronic device, whether a valid date has ever been entered into the electronic device;

instructions for prompting a user to enter a valid date responsive to determining that the no valid date has ever been entered into the device;

instructions for setting a date valid flag (DVF) responsive to entry of a valid date into the device;

instructions for determining the current date and storing the current date as the ISD responsive to determining that (a) the DVF is TRUE, (b) the electronic device has been functioning for a specified duration, and (c) the ISD is not currently stored; and

instructions for preventing a user from altering the ISD, once established, without entering an unlocking code obtained from a manufacturer of the device.

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23 (new). The computer program product of claim 22, wherein the instructions for preventing a user from altering the ISD include instructions for enabling the user to operate the device despite the absence of a valid ISD.